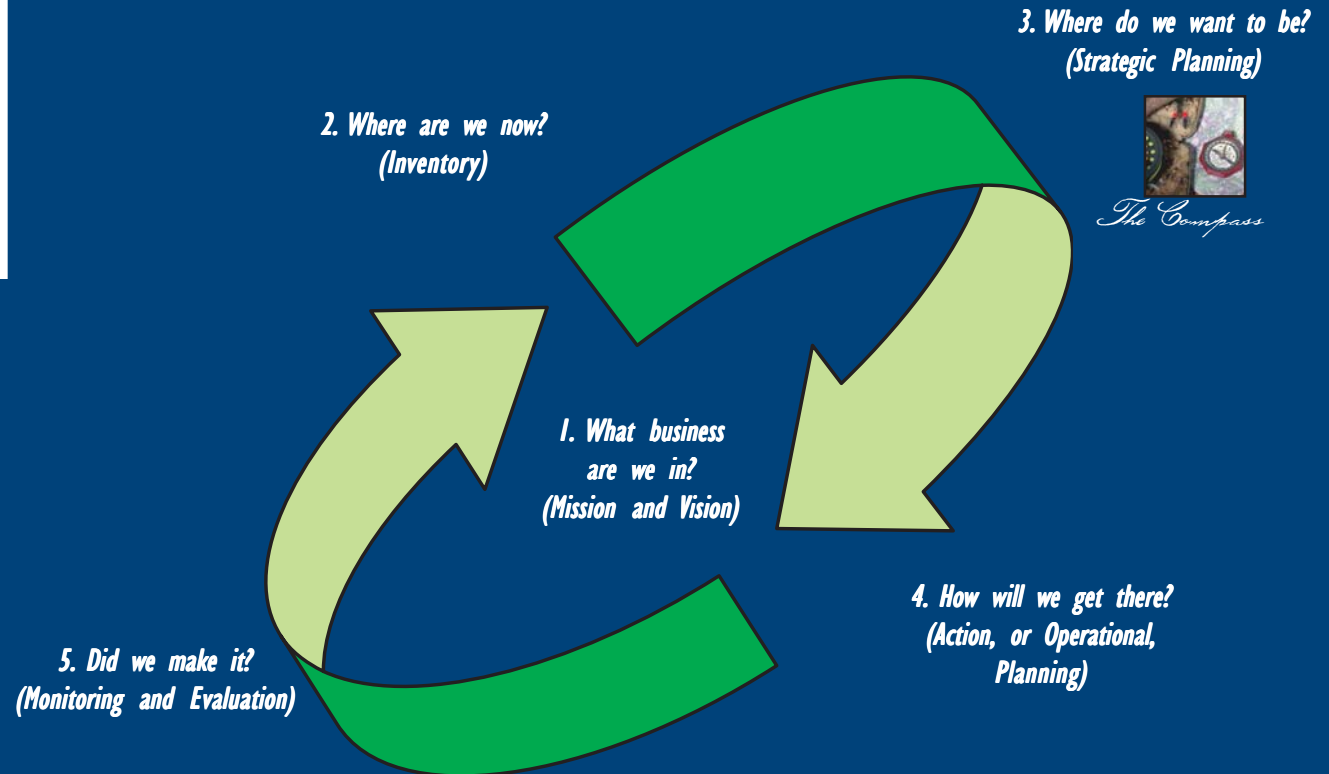


Destination: Excellence

The Journey—Comprehensive Management Systems

The Compass, the Department's strategic plan, is a long-range, big picture document that describes where the Department wants to be in the future and how, in general terms, we intend to get there. *The Compass* is part of a "comprehensive management system" that links together all aspects of our work as a fully-functioning whole. A comprehensive management system is an adaptive process that tends to self-correct and improve performance over time by cycling around five main elements:





Setting Out On the Journey —Converting Plans Into Action

The Compass by design contains no details; it is broad in scope. The details of how strategies in *The Compass* will be implemented to achieve the goals, objectives, and desired outcomes will be described in actions plans, often called operational plans. Such plans are illustrated as element 4 in the diagram of comprehensive management systems (previous page). Monitoring and evaluation, element 5 in the diagram, will determine whether strategies were implemented and whether they achieved the goals, objectives, and desired outcomes.

ACTION PLANNING

Action plans provide specific details about how the Department will attempt to achieve identified goals. Such plans need not be long or involved, but they must describe the Department's programs, projects, and activities in terms of how much will be accomplished over a specified period of time, what specific methods will be used, what resources are needed (personnel, equipment, funding), and how progress toward or attainment of goals will be measured. Action plans are the link between *The Compass*, the budget, and the activities of Department employees. Goals, objectives, and desired outcomes from *The Compass* and action plans will be incorporated into budget requests and employee performance evaluations.

Action plans also serve a number of other purposes. They present information about Department programs and projects to the public and provide an opportunity for interested and affected people to comment. Action plans clearly state goals and how progress will be measured, thereby holding the Department accountable to the public and elected officials. Action plans will be monitored and evaluated to determine if programs and projects are “working,” that is, achieving the desired goals.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Essential to adaptive management, the monitoring and evaluation component measures the performance of the Department's programs, projects, and activities. Over time, monitoring and evaluation result in self-correction, improvement of performance, and accountability.

The biological and social systems in which the Department operates are complex, and because of that complexity, the results of management actions are often difficult to predict. In an adaptive management approach, management actions are intentionally set up as experiments, with expectations described in advance in the action plans. Measuring progress and performance determines whether the strategies were implemented and whether they achieved the desired results. The resulting information is evaluated to compare the expected results with the actual results. These comparisons lead to greater understanding and adjustment of action plans to better achieve desired outcomes.

PLAN REVIEW AND REVISIONS

The Compass is a “living” document. It is subject to change based on new information or circumstances. *The Compass* will receive an in-depth review by the Commission at least every five years to ensure that the Department is aligned with the desires and expectations of stakeholders. The Department will annually review and report to the Commission progress towards the goals in *The Compass*.



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